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# P R E F A C E

T O T H E

## Nineteenth Volume of the Critical Review.

**T**HIS work is now in the tenth year of its publication ; a tract of time which its authors REVIEW with the highest satisfaction, as it affords them an opportunity to express their gratitude for the long and growing indulgence their labours have met with, from their commencement to the present period. They are conscious that if the most sincere intentions for the benefit of literature can entitle them to success, they deserve it ; but to imagine that it can be attained without some merit in the execution, would be offering an insult to the judgment of their readers.

Their province is, perhaps, the most ungrateful and difficult of any in the republic of letters. Their enemies may be counted by the numbers of those authors whose works they have either entirely condemned, or coldly praised, a formidable and a busy band !—Their friends consist of the few, the very few, writers, whose modesty inclines them to believe, that favourable, but candid criticism, may be of service to their works, upon their first appearance in public.

The nature of their undertaking sufficiently points out its difficulties. Seldom indulged to tread the  
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carpet grounds of learning, they must toil through its most rugged paths, while a thousand eyes are ready to take advantage of, and expose, the least inadvertency they commit, and even to misrepresent them when they make none, but are proceeding with firmness and caution. The character they assume lays them under another great disadvantage; because the mistake that would be overlooked as venial in another writer, is considered as unpardonable in a Critical Reviewer. Even prudential considerations are attended with disagreeable difficulties in the execution of their work, through the variety of their readers. The divine, the physician, the philologist, the mathematician, and, in short, every profession expects to be gratified in its own particular department of study, while the multifarious productions of the month deny the Reviewers the pleasure of answering their expectations.

In their last address to the public \*, they mentioned some personal attacks that had been made upon them by their foes, and upon one gentleman in particular. Perseverance is one of the characters belonging to the sons of dulness, and the Reviewers have experienced it. Having repelled the artillery of private calumny and literary obloquy, the battery against them has been lately changed to a higher ground, but without doing greater execution, and that upon the following occasion :

Every one is sensible, that since his present Majesty's accession to the throne, political writings have engrossed the attention of the public of England more than they have done at any time since the Revolution. A new æra of the constitution seems to have been opened, and it is generally believed that some of the most respectable personages in the kingdom have contributed by their literary labours to

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\* See Preface to Vol. XI.



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the national controversies, in which they are so deeply interested. Be that as it will, the Critical Reviewers, according to the plan of their undertaking and their constant practice, could not help reviewing political, as they did other, works; but they deny that they ever entered into the dispute with any spirit either of party or acrimony: far from taking either side, they blamed occasionally both, with a freedom which shewed that they were determined to preserve, to the last, their character of impartiality and independency. To give instances of this, would be to quote almost every page of their Monthly Catalogues for the last three years. It happens, however, as the most indifferent by-standers may observe, that the papers and pamphlets against any administration, are bought up with much greater avidity than those written in its defence; and consequently the opposition-writers are, of late, more numerous than those for the government, as well as more indecent, more shallow, and more incorrect, because the bulk of them write only for the profit of their publications; and therefore the Reviewers have, perhaps, censured a greater number of antiministerial than of ministerial productions.

Notwithstanding this necessary fate of such publications, the Reviewers appeal to the whole course of their articles, whether they have given more quarter to the one party than to the other; and they are confident it will be found, considering the number of both, that their accounts of censure and praise are pretty equally ballanced. But all the care they have taken has not prevented their enemies from publishing in the papers, and propagating in private, the most infamous falsehoods, as if the Reviewers were tools of government, and kept in pay by the ministry, to defend their measures, right or wrong. As this virulent accusation is an attack upon their impartiality, and consequently upon their morals, they take this opportunity to declare,  
that

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that they are under no influence whatever; nor are they more attached to the government than to the opposition. They have often bewailed the necessity they were under to criticise political controversies; but never pursued them farther than the interests of the constitution, truth, learning, and, sometimes, injured merit on both sides, indispenfably required.

Armed thus with integrity and independency, they are determined to proceed in the paths of candour and confcience; regardless of those porcupines who, irritated through difappointment, dart their fretful quills at the writings or persons of the Reviewers, who fear them no more than Pyrrhus did the weapon of Priam, which fell upon his buckler—*Imbelle fine ietu.*